

# Soldiers

## • *Salute to servicemembers*



Stories from around the Army to include:

- *Presidential communications*
- *From wounded warrior to soap star*
- *Tattoos to remember*
- *Ranger dietician*





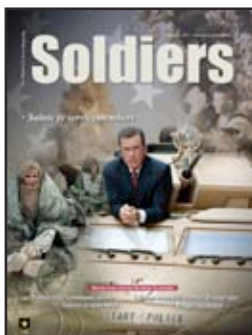


# Soldiers

February 2011 • VOLUME 66, NO. 2



Servicemembers ensure President Barack Obama is wired for sound as he waits to be introduced at a luncheon at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago, Aug. 5, 2010. See story on page 10. (Official White House photo by Pete Souza)



[ On the Cover ]

◀ Stories from around the Army  
(Cover montage by Peggy Frierson. Photo of Stephen Colbert by Scott Gries/Picture Group, printed with permission)

[ Coming Next Month ]

March 2011 - Medals of Honor awarded



A White House Communications Agency employee installs a satellite at an event site. See story on page 10. (Photo courtesy of the White House Communications Agency)

February 2011

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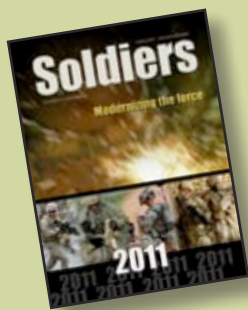
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The Army is our nation's greatest resource in defense of our homeland. Every day Soldiers and civilians perform acts of valor. The heroic acts performed on the battlefield and the acts of kindness from humanitarian efforts demonstrate the strength of the Army. We want to tell your story. To find out how the Defense Media Activity, Army Production can tell your story, contact your unit public affairs officer or send your submissions via e-mail to:

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Magazine archives:  
<http://www.army.mil/soldiers/archives>



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## Soldiers

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Thomas Jefferson Awards  
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NAGC Blue Pencil  
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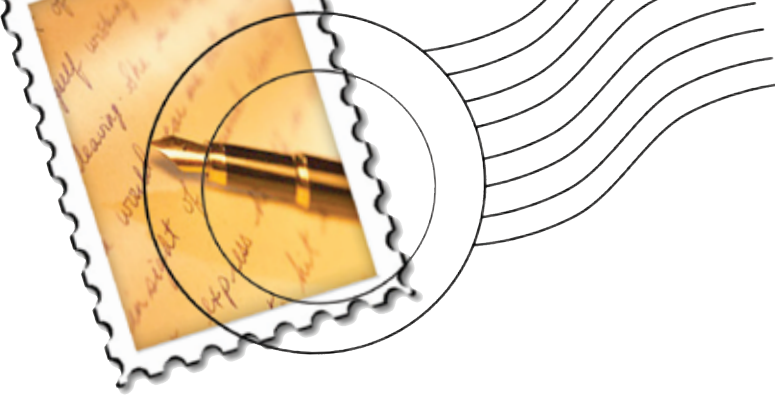
Thomas Jefferson Awards  
Outstanding Flagship Writer  
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Elizabeth M. Collins





# MAILCALL

Letters from the field



## Women of West Point

I really enjoyed the (First Women of West Point) story (featured in the October 2010 issue).

Back in 1976, when I was a speedy-4, I went to Airborne School with the two of the first female cadets. (Their gender) didn't really make a difference—the Black Hats hated everyone.

My memory is one of their kindness. I loosened my leg straps on my second jump, which caused the strap to grab my right testicle—never knew it until the chute opened. I screamed for 1,250 feet, (and) when I hit the ground, dropped my drawers right there. I still had the sensation of 149 pounds of weight on my right one, so this caused me to vomit. They (the two females) came over and asked if I was OK. Some memory!

**Retired Lt. Col. Marc A. Smith**



## October recruiting ad

I am an avid fan of Soldiers magazine, and I always look forward to the articles each and every month.

However, once I finished reading the October 2010 issue, I noticed the ad on the back cover, which encourages those with degrees to become Army officers. What caught my eye was the order of precedence of the Soldier's ribbons. There is not much more to say other than look for yourself and you'll see (the discrepancy).

**Brian J. Lince**

**Retired Soldier**

Mr. Lince is correct. The Army Service Ribbon and National Defense Service Ribbon worn by the officer featured in the ad on the back cover of the October 2010 issue are switched.

Regrettably, neither the Soldiers magazine staff, nor the Accessions Command Outreach and Marketing team (which shot the photo and designed the ad) caught the error prior to publication.

Ultimately, regardless of the source, the editor in chief is responsible for all featured content. I greatly appreciate the diligence of readers like Mr. Lince, and will continue to strive for excellence.

Sincerely,

**Carrie McLeroy**

**Editor in chief**

## December issue

I started reading Soldiers magazine because of a friend of mine, but I continue to read it because I enjoy it every time.

I wanted to reach out to you and your staff, because after I read "The Things They Take to War" in the December 2010 issue, I realized that every time I read a story from Soldiers magazine, I get new information or hardcore

emotions. I need to be careful when I read the articles, because I have been known to start crying when reading them.

Thank you very much,

**Mandy White**

**Woodbridge, Va.**



## Submissions to Soldiers

A copy of Soldiers was recently passed on

to me by a co-worker who performed an assignment at Fort A.P. Hill, Va.

As a former magazine editor and freelance writer, I was wondering if you accept outside submission from civilians? If so, can you provide an editorial calendar and writer's guidelines? I'd be interested in submitting articles for your consideration, as well as accompanying photographs.

Thank you for your kinds attention.

**Amy Detwiler**

**Altamonte Springs, Fla.**

Soldiers magazine accepts submissions from servicemembers and civilians alike, as long as they directly pertain to the Army.

Generally speaking, the editorial staff roughly plans out issues six to nine months prior to the publication month. For example, content through the June 2011 issue has already been determined. However, due to ever changing priorities, we do not publish an editorial calendar.

For more information about the submission guidelines and processes, please e-mail the editor in chief at [carrie.mcleroy@afn.dma.mil](mailto:carrie.mcleroy@afn.dma.mil), or the Defense Media Activity, Army Production Division assignment desk at [assignmentdesk@afn.dma.mil](mailto:assignmentdesk@afn.dma.mil).

## May issue

I just wanted to say that Soldiers is a very good magazine. I have the May issue, and it is very well put together. It is nice to see such a good magazine dedicated to our brave Soldiers. Thanks so much for a great magazine.

**Angelique Sims**

## Soldiers values your opinion

To comment, keep your remarks to under 150 words, include your name, rank and address, and send them to: **Defense Media Activity, Army Production, Attn: Editor, Soldiers Magazine, Box 31, 2511 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Arlington, VA 22202-3900** or e-mail: [assignmentdesk@afn.dma.mil](mailto:assignmentdesk@afn.dma.mil)



# Army astronauts

Col. Doug Wheelock performs a spacewalk to install a P6 truss segment with solar arrays on the International Space Station during mission STS-120.

**Story by Elizabeth M. Collins**  
**Photos courtesy of NASA**

*"Soldiers magazine...this is Houston. Please call Station for a voice check."*

*"Station, this is Soldiers magazine... how do you hear me?"*

*"We've got you loud and clear. Welcome aboard the space station," said Col. Doug Wheelock.*

...the first active-duty Soldier to command the International Space Station, never dreamed he could ever be an astronaut. It just seemed too

far out of reach when, at the age of 9, he watched Neil Armstrong take those first fateful steps on the moon.

But becoming an Army aviator? That was a dream he could touch, and he attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and eventually the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School.

"I just wanted to fly," he said during a satellite interview from space. "I eventually got a chance to go to the test pilot school and got around people who were working in this industry and people who had contacts at NASA...so that really worked out for me." Wheelock reported for Astronaut Candidate

training in 1998. He would become an Army astronaut.

Like all Army astronauts (at press time, there were five, including one in training and one about to retire), Wheelock is assigned to the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command's NASA detachment at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. After launching on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, TMA-19, in June, he took over as space station commander from Russian cosmonaut Alexander Skvortsov in September.

Soldiers might not realize that some of their own are serving far above





# take flight

The Space Shuttle Discovery, with Mission Specialist Col. Doug Wheelock and six others onboard, leaves Earth to link up with the International Space Station, October 2007.

the Earth's atmosphere, but Wheelock has said in other interviews that space is the "ultimate" high ground, so it's the perfect place for a Soldier.

And while the Army may have the smallest detachment out of all the services at NASA, it also has the strongest, its members like to say, and they're quick to point out that proportionally the amount of time they have spent on the ISS is greater than many of the other services.

"One of the things we find...working here is the ability to contribute to a much larger relation than yourself, to be able to subjugate for the greater

glory of the team...and the Army guys have grown up doing that their entire lives," said Col. T.J. Creamer, Army detachment commander at NASA.

"That aspect of becoming the best team member possible helps you in the selection process, but also radiates the Army qualities, the ethics that we've grown up with in the Army, and we see that at NASA. Our Army guys...are top-notch folks, and NASA knows that they get high quality from them."

It's that ability to follow as well as lead that makes Soldiers such great astronauts, added Lt. Col. Shane Kimbrough, but both men cautioned

that because applicants have about a less than 1 percent chance of being selected as a candidate, Soldiers have to excel and be the best at everything they do, from their first day as a platoon leader. They also need to have at least completed a command, Command and General Staff College, Intermediate-Level Education and a master's degree in a math, science or engineering field.

Nothing, Kimbrough said, will ever beat the moment he learned he was finally selected as an astronaut. After a year-long interview process, he was already working at NASA in another capacity and knew the phone calls



**“It’s like, wow, we’re all trying to kind of live...and work together on this little blue marble in the middle of space.”**

**—Col. Doug Wheelock**

(Above) Col. Doug Wheelock, attired in his Extravehicular Mobility Unit spacesuit, prepares to leave the International Space Station through the Quest Airlock, Nov. 3, 2007, to begin STS-120 mission’s fourth session of extravehicular activity.

(Right) Col. Doug Wheelock, Expedition 24 flight engineer, services the Minus Eighty Laboratory Freezer in the Kibo laboratory of the International Space Station.



would be going out on a certain day, so when he saw his boss’s number on the caller ID, he was ecstatic.

After several years of intensive training and office work, astronauts wait for a second crucial phone call: the call that they’ve been assigned to a space mission. And once they’ve gone, it could be years before they go again. Most of an astronaut’s work involves training, administrative work, or supporting missions from the ground.

But the feeling when the shuttle or a Russian Soyuz catapults from the Earth, through its atmosphere and into orbit is almost indescribable, the astronauts said—definitely worth waiting a lifetime.

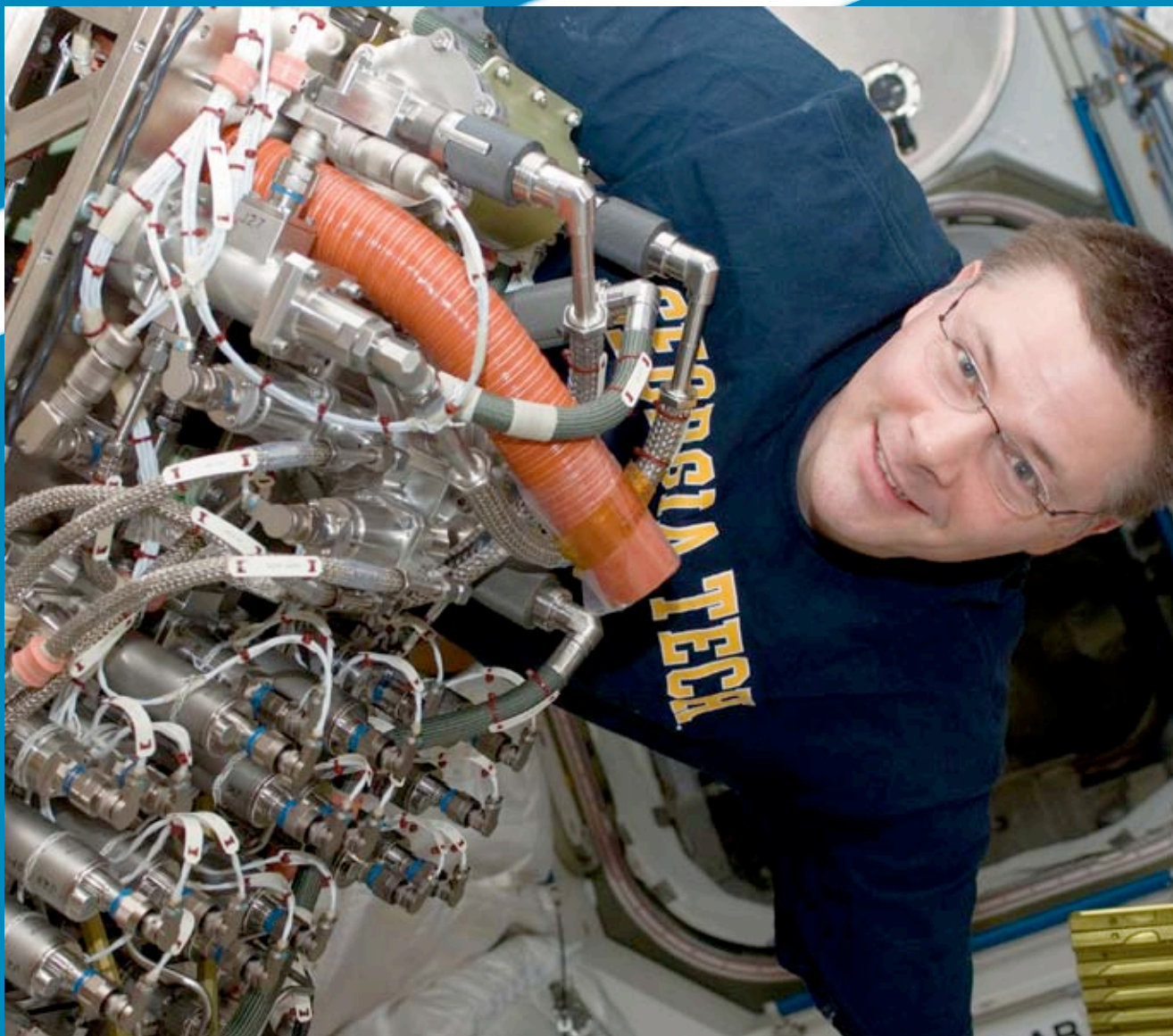
“It’s absolutely just the coolest feeling I’ve ever had in my life, feeling the acceleration of that spacecraft and the rockets and the fire below you and just knowing that in eight minutes I’m going to be in space, so I’m going to be going about 17,000 miles an hour,” remembered Kimbrough, who was on the Space Shuttle Endeavor. “You feel all the acceleration right through your chest, so that’s really exciting. As soon as the eight minutes is over, you unbuckle and you’re floating in space and that’s another kind of euphoric feeling. That’s just amazing and it doesn’t go away until you obviously come back in the atmosphere. It’s incredible.”

Another incredible thing is the

view from space. The ISS orbits the Earth every 90 minutes, so every 45 minutes, crew members enjoy breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, and Creamer has watched grown men and women—trained astronauts and scientists—cry from the sheer beauty. Wheelock added that looking back at the Earth, an explosion of color and life in the middle of the vast wasteland of space, takes his breath away.

“Of course, when you look down on the planet now, you can see the different land forms and continents and of course there are no borders,” he explained. “The things that you worry about when you’re on Earth, they seem to sort of fade away and you look at





In the Tranquility node aboard the International Space Station, Col. Doug Wheelock, Expedition 25 commander, works to install the new Sabatier, Oct. 13, 2010. The Sabatier extracts oxygen out of the ISS atmosphere and puts it into the Oxygen Generator System.

things in a broader picture.

"It's like, wow, we're all trying to kind of live...and work together on this little blue marble in the middle of space. And sometimes I think we tend to lose perspective that we have a beautiful place to live, and...sometimes we're not good stewards of our home. And it puts things in perspective that there truly are no borders.... It helps to peel those things away."

Wheelock's wife, Kate, echoed his sentiments, saying she often went outside and stared at the sky when NASA told her the space station was supposed to be orbiting overhead, and if she saw a particularly beautiful sunset, she would take a picture and e-mail it to

him, saying "This is my perspective of a sunset, on my side of the world."

Although she said that it's a little like watching Superman when Wheelock changes from his street clothes to his blue NASA flight suit, being married to an astronaut isn't that different than being married to a Soldier, except that he isn't in the same immediate danger. He spends months in training or in space, and like most Army wives, she's been known to miss a precious phone call or two. During his first mission, she kept getting a call with area code 281, with a number from the Johnson Space Center, and ignoring it. But it was Wheelock, calling her from space. "So I joke with people whenever

I go out and tell them, 'Yeah, did you know that space has a 281 area code?'"

Weekly calls home, e-mail and even communication via social networks aside, life on the space station has a very regimented schedule, explained Creamer, who returned to Earth last summer. After spending eight hours sleeping in a small "phone booth," zipped into a light sleeping bag to ensure the astronauts don't go floating off in their sleep, they enjoy breakfast. Anyone familiar with MREs would feel at home eating NASA food, he added, although the astronauts can request special deliveries of real food when a shuttle is expected.

As ISS commander, this was one of





Col. Doug Wheelock



Lt. Col. Shane Kimbrough



Col. T.J. Creamer



Col. T.J. Creamer, Expedition 22 flight engineer, equipped with a bungee harness, exercises on the Combined Operational Load Bearing External Resistance Treadmill in the Harmony node of the International Space Station, Jan. 8, 2010.

Wheelock's jobs, said Peggy A. Whitson, a civilian astronaut and former ISS commander. She's now chief of the Astronaut Office at NASA. Not only did he have to make sure that the supplies at the ISS stayed stocked—important because if something ran out, it could be a long time before it was replaced—but he also prepared the crew for any emergency situations. Whitson called them the “Big Three”: fire, depressurization and toxic atmosphere. Wheelock also integrated the ground crew with the flight crew, ensuring everyone was on the same page—not unlike a small Army command, he explained.

According to Creamer, the astronauts also spend two-and-a-half hours a day exercising to maintain their bone

and muscle mass. Because everything in space is weightless, they lift weights against the evacuation cylinders, which create a vacuum. The rest of the day is taken up by meetings, vehicle maintenance and science experiments.

At its heart, the International Space Station, which Wheelock, Creamer and Kimbrough all helped construct, is a high-tech laboratory where scientist-astronauts from 15 countries can work without the pesky variable of gravity. Gravity, Creamer explained, can affect the shape of everything from cancer cells to candle flames. Research aboard the ISS has aided the cancer-cell interruption process, and has even led to more efficient cars.

During his mission, Wheelock par-

ticipated in an ongoing study of how dietary countermeasures might lessen the bone loss experienced by astronauts during long-duration spaceflights—especially important with the shuttle program set to end, and all eyes turning to the next frontier: Mars.

“I like to tell people we don’t just go to space to have fun and goof off... we go to help people here on Earth,” Kimbrough said. “If we’re going for other reasons, I think we’re going for the wrong reasons. By going to Mars, I just can’t imagine the amount of technology that’s going to get developed.”

A Mars mission is at least 30 or 40 years in the future, he cautions, and it’s something no one country will ever be able to accomplish alone. But, added





The Soyuz TMA-17 spacecraft approaches the International Space Station, Dec. 22, 2009, carrying Russian Cosmonaut Oleg Kotov, Soyuz commander and Expedition 22 flight engineer; along with NASA Astronaut Col. T.J. Creamer and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency Astronaut Soichi Noguchi, both flight engineers.

Creamer, staying on Earth forever seems so limiting and depressing. After all, he half joked, every species, like “the poor dodo bird,” who ever went extinct here on Earth, did so without ever trying to leave the planet.

There’s even, he thinks, the chance of finding life out there somewhere: “Every place we have found water, at the mouth of underground volcanoes, in the frozen Arctic tundra, we have found bacteria. Every place we have found water, we have found life. So, if we’re able to find water some place, not only can we make our own fuel for return flights, we’ve got a good chance of finding life.”

The main problem with being an Army astronaut, the men agreed, is that

the job is just too good. Not only is there really no way to top commanding the International Space Station, by the time space Soldiers have gone through their training and flown a mission or two, it’s usually time to retire—from the Army, at least. They simply stay at NASA and become civilian astronauts.

But shortly before he was scheduled to return to Earth, Wheelock said he was determined to buck that trend. Would he like to fly another mission to space? Of course, but a huge part of him also wants to return to the regular Army.

“I have to pinch myself every day, especially when you get the chance to look out the window,” he said. “I feel very blessed to be here. I love

the Army...and I’ve got a lot of my classmates from West Point, folks who I’ve served with over the years, who are scattered around the globe, some in Afghanistan, some in Iraq. So in that light, I feel a bit guilty from time to time that I get a chance to experience this, but I know it’s an opportunity of a lifetime and I can serve our Army and our country here as well, just by doing a fantastic job here as commander and also doing the research that’s needed here aboard the space station.” ♦

**Editor’s note:** *Wheelock returned to Earth aboard another Russian Soyuz spacecraft, landing in Kazakhstan, Nov. 25, 2010.*



White House Communications Agency employees monitor the video display in the WHCA Master Control Facility. (Photo courtesy of the White House Communications Agency)

Story by Jacqueline M. Hames

**W**HEN the commander in chief speaks, people listen. Soldiers and civilians alike pay close attention to the message, but rarely wonder how that message is getting to them. Most think it's the media: They record and broadcast presidential speeches, write articles about events and disseminate the information quickly, but that's only half the story. There are actually many hours of preparation for events before the media arrives: The podium must be put in place, the microphones set up and the sound and video equipment tested, among other things, and the White House Communications Agency prepares all of it expertly.

"The most challenging part of my job is to, on a daily basis, ensure that the president can execute his roles as head of state, commander in chief and

chief executive," Air Force Col. Michael B. Black, commander, explained. "The members here at the White House Communications Agency play an instrumental role in the president

being able to execute those roles."

Black explained that WHCA members are the only people connecting the president to whom he needs to talk—directly, through the White House



A White House Communications Agency employee prepares the audio mix position for a presidential event. (Photo courtesy of the White House Communications Agency)



switchboard, or indirectly, through speaking events and worldwide visits.

“Where else could you say that you directly support the Office of the President and witness history every single day?” he asked.

Originally known as the White House Signal Detachment, the WHCA was formed in March 1942 to provide normal and emergency communications requirements in support of the president. In 1954, the WHSD was renamed the White House Army Signal Agency under the Office of the Chief Signal Officer; by 1962, control of the unit went to the White House Military Office, and was reestablished as the WHCA.

Because WHCA has to support the president at any time, anywhere in the world, the agency is naturally very large.

It's organized into six commands and seven supporting directorates that work closely with one another to provide premiere telecommunications support to the president and supporting



A White House Communications Agency employee prepares a video presentation for an event. (Photo courtesy of the White House Communications Agency)

staff. Those commands include: the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Presidential Communications Commands, the Special Mission Command, the Visual Information Command and the Washington Area Communications Command. The sup-

porting staff directorates are Personnel, Security, Operations, Logistics, Future Systems, Enterprise Architecture and Strategic Planning, and Resource Management.

Colonel Clinton Bigger, deputy



A White House Communications Agency employee helps President Barack Obama prepare for his weekly video address. (Official White House photo by Lawrence Jackson)



commander, describes the work at WHCA as high-visibility, high-tension and high-pressure.

“(That) requires WHCA to have the highest trained, technically proficient people that are strong leaders, that can operate independently, capable of making decisions,” Bigger said. “When they are presented with a situation, they need to be trained and qualified to act.”

Intense training and leadership abilities help the WHCA Soldiers and servicemembers to think on their feet, which is crucial to delivering quality service to the president. Staff Sgt. Ryan Cotto, a member of the Visual Information Command, arrived at WHCA in 2006 and has not had a true mess-up during his tenure, but has had a few instances that tried his ability to think on his feet.

During an event with former President George W. Bush and the president of Mexico, Cotto was in charge of setting up the speaking area, to include the podium and sound. Security came through after they were finished to check the area before the principals arrived, and when Cotto and his team came back for the final sound check about an hour prior to the event kick-off, all of their equipment had been tampered with and nothing was working right.

Luckily, Cotto explained, he had labeled everything. Cotto double checked all the cables and hooked them up correctly, and then checked the soundboard to bring back his settings—which he had saved. He found the 75-foot fiber snake was broken and Cotto had to open up all the gear to compare all the connections against each other.

He matched the cables to their correct plugs, put the gear back together, and powered on the equipment. Cotto and his team lead did the final sound check in a room full of the press, but they had everything running smoothly by the time the presidents arrived.

“You have to be able to adapt,”

Cotto insisted.

Staff Sgt. Jillian Richards, shift supervisor for the non-secure switchboard under the WACC, agreed. Her job at the switchboard requires great mental flexibility as well.

“Every now and then, you get the really off-the-wall calls. One that I actually got: Vice President Biden, shortly after he came into office, said ‘Hey, I want to talk to Craig Smith in New York.’ I was like ‘All right, Mr. Vice President, I’ll call you back once I get him on line,’ because I knew it was going to take a while to look up,” Richards said.

“And then it dawns on me: Craig Smith in New York. That’s all the information he gave me, too,” she said. Richards then did what any good WHCA agent would do: she thought on her feet and did a quick Internet search. “I got very lucky, because it turned out (Smith) won the Democratic primary race” recently.

Richards was able to connect Biden to Smith, but it was definitely a trial; most calls are a little easier. Richards also connects incoming calls with the White House, dealing with legitimate calls as well as pranks, which Richards and her team ignore. Her favorite part of the job, however, is connecting Soldiers and other servicemembers to their Families.

“Every Thanksgiving and Christmas, the president calls 10 servicemembers around the world. We facilitate those calls,” Richards said. “We sit there and we’ll call them every day until the actual day, we’ll put them on line with the president, and then we’ll call them back and give them a free morale call anywhere in the world that they would like to call.

“To be able to do that—you just can’t feel bad about that day,” she said.

Mental flexibility is only one facet of the hard work and skill needed to operate as communications experts for the president. WHCA members undertake days, and sometimes even weeks of preparation for a presidential appearance, especially when the president travels.

“President Obama travels as much or a little more than President Bush

A Soldier checks equipment at the White House Communications Agency headquarters in Washington. (Photo by Jacqueline M. Hames)



did,” Bigger explained. “Vice President Biden travels 400 percent more—that’s not an exaggeration—400 percent more than Vice President Cheney, and their requirements for audio-visual support are dramatically different.”

Every time the president travels, WHCA members put in countless hours organizing, loading and transporting equipment for set up before the president arrives. It’s a physically and mentally demanding job, but it is done with precision.

“I’m in charge of all the logistics for the trips,” Sgt. 1st Class David Brown, operations noncommissioned officer for the 1st PCC, said, “so

basically everything boils down to me as far as getting the team out to the trip sites, making sure that they have lodging, making sure that we have the vehicles that we need when we get there.

“Once we get on the site, I meet with hotel representatives and basic-



Sgt. 1st Class Charles Moening adjusts radio equipment at the White House Communications Agency headquarters. (Photo by Jacqueline M. Hames)



(Left and below) Soldiers load pallets and prepare equipment for transportation to an event. (Photo by Jacqueline M. Hames)



cally we do walkthroughs of the hotels, find the office spaces that we need... that's all my responsibility," he said.

As a logistics lead, Brown manages rental vehicles and helps organize the packing and unpacking of all the equipment on-site.

"I have thousands of pounds of equipment that we're moving by hand, and no, by the way, you can't touch it," Brown said, laughing, "We're off load-

ing it all ourselves." He explained that because of the nature of the equipment and the precise way it is packed, it actually slows the WHCA teams down when other people help them unload.

Brown's favorite part of the job is being able to travel with the president, visiting places he otherwise wouldn't, like the United Arab Emirates, but it's a little hard on his family when he travels.

Brown thinks his wife prefers this job to extended deployments in war zones. "It's much easier than long deployments," he said.

Sergeant 1st Class Charles Moening, operations radio program manager, agrees that travel is his favorite part of the job, as well as the most challenging. He helps support travel teams by providing radios and telephones, and other technical aspects of a trip or speaking event.

"We have to coordinate with our customers, figure out what their needs are, figure out how we can make that happen with the equipment we have or do we get (more) equipment in, and that sets the standards for the travel people on how they meet their customers' needs," Moening explained.

He also acknowledged how much of a toll the frequent, short-term travel takes on Families. "Here, that phone could ring at any time, there could be a new trip, and you

could go tomorrow," Moening said.

Despite the stressors of frequent travel on both the WHCA member and Family, Moening believes they are fortunate because members and their Families can always connect with each other.

"One of the biggest things is the availability of communications for us. We're always able to reach out and talk to our Families," he said.

"Working for the president is pretty cool too," Brown added.

"I absolutely love getting up and coming into work every single day," Black said. "It's exciting, it's definitely an adventure. The caliber of folks that we have in the White House Communication Agency (is great)." ♦

**Editor's note:** *The White House Communications Agency is always looking for new members and is committed to recruiting the best and brightest individuals from all services. If you are interested in applying for an assignment at the WHCA, visit [www.disa.mil/whca](http://www.disa.mil/whca), or call (202) 757-5150. To learn more about the agency, visit <http://disa.mil/news/pressresources/factsheets/whca.html>.*

An aerial view of a White House event illustrates the extent of audio and visual preparation White House Communications Agency members conduct daily. (Official White House photo by Chuck Kennedy)

Soldiers and other White House Communications Agency members prepare to load equipment onto a truck for transportation to an event. (Photo by Jacqueline M. Hames)





# AMERICA'S ARMY: THE STRENGTH OF THE NATION™



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### **Ms. Tanisha Owens**

Pride in her family and in her husband's service keeps Tanisha Owens going despite the Army life that more often than not keeps her husband from home. While enduring Chief Warrant Officer I Antonio Owens' 14-hour workdays on base, and his multiple tours of duty in Iraq, Owens has valiantly raised the couple's three children

— even suffering the loss of a stillborn infant. She also has instilled in her children a pride so fierce, the 2-year-old smiles whenever anyone mentions that his dad is in Iraq. Tanisha says she's proud of her Family and proud to take care of things at home so her husband can take care of their country. "I love the Army," she says. "Hooah."

**The Nation's strength starts here.**

# Salute to servicemembers

## Comedian Stephen Colbert inspires

Story by Kevin M. Hymel

**S**TEPHEN Colbert had a problem. The star of “The Colbert Report” had just clicked on an urgent e-mail from Newsweek magazine, discovering they had changed the cover he had posed for—something they promised they wouldn’t do.

He was at the end of a marathon day, arriving in Iraq, shooting bits for his show, and meeting with hundreds of troops. Now it was midnight and Newsweek had sent him six urgent

e-mails. The magazine was due to the publisher shortly.

The cover showed Colbert with the word “Iraq” shaved into the side of his head. At the bottom of the page had been a headline, asking if Americans had forgotten about the war—but now it was gone. Colbert had been the guest editor for the issue and decided the headline, but the people at Newsweek wanted the image to speak for itself. Colbert sank his head into his hands. Would anyone get the message?

“They promised they wouldn’t do

it,” Colbert related from his New York office where he tapes his show. “I told them, ‘Once I leave the country, you can’t change anything.’ That was my deal.”

Not knowing what to do, he closed the image and walked into an adjacent mess hall where he found some Soldiers drinking coffee. “Soldiers,” Colbert called to them, “I need your help.” The men followed him to his computer station.

He explained his job with Newsweek, and said he needed their help to decide the cover. He clicked on the image and the men cheered and high-fived each other. “Alright,” Colbert said. “Alright, that’s nice, but what does it mean?”

### “The Colbert Report”

Actor/comedian Stephen Colbert accepts an Army pin and commendation from Gen. Ray Odierno (left) and Gen. David Petraeus, on behalf of the “Colbert Nation” in September 2010. (Photo courtesy of Comedy Central)





# troops at home and abroad

The men fell silent and studied the image. Finally, one spoke up: "It means Iraq is on your mind, and it should be on our minds too."

A relieved Colbert blurted out "Done! Thank you." Then he gave credit where it was due. He turned to the Soldier and told him, "You can tell your folks that you decided the cover of *Newsweek*." Colbert, who had come to Iraq for the troops, was finding out that the troops were there for him.

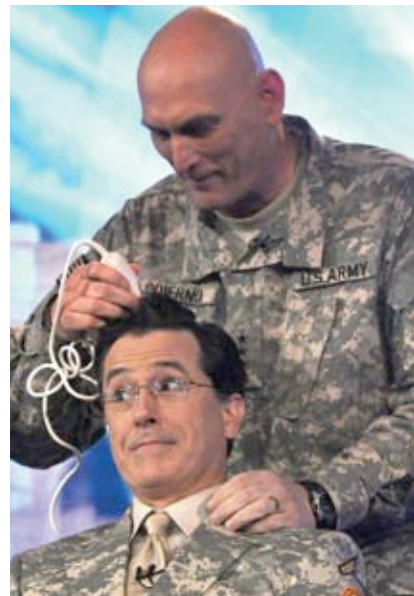
For those who don't know Stephen Colbert, he plays a faux-conservative pundit on a popular half-hour satirical news show weeknights on Comedy Central. But his character is more than a pundit; he's a blustery egotist with an insatiable appetite for attention.

You might say he lives in a "Colbert-centric" universe. He also has no object permanency. As Colbert put it: If a ball rolls behind a couch he's like a 2-year-old—he doesn't think the ball exists anymore.

But Colbert-the-character and Colbert-the-man have something in common: They both love the troops. And Colbert proved it when he taped his "Colbert Report" from one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Iraq's Green Zone for an entire week in June 2009.

## **The request**

Colbert's Iraq adventure began in 2008, when retired Marine Col. Bing West asked him, "If Gen. (David) Petraeus invited you to come do your show in Iraq, would you do it?"



Gen. Ray Odierno, then-commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, pretends to give actor/comedian Stephen Colbert of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" a haircut during Colbert's performance for U.S. military personnel at Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, June 7, 2009. Colbert participated in a USO/Armed Forces Entertainment tour, June 5-11, 2009. (Photo by Steve Manuel)



Stephen Colbert, of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report," high-fives members of the audience during his performance at Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, June 7, 2009. (Photo by Steve Manuel)



# Memories of Iraq

Stephen Colbert greets troops and civilians at Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq, June 5, 2009, as part of his "Operation Iraqi Stephen: Going Commando" tour. (Photo by Sgt. Lindsey Bradford)

West was promoting his book, "The Strongest Tribe," on Colbert's show when he leaned over during the commercial break and made the proposal. "I would be honored," Colbert responded. "But that's not the same thing as a 'yes.'" Colbert had a 91-person staff and knew he could not commit without asking them. "But I immediately wanted to go."

Colbert already had a good relationship with the military. Soldiers and Marines who loved his show sent him American flags that had either flown over a base or had gone along on a mission. The first was a flag that went along on a Black Hawk helicopter during Operation Beef Hammer in Afghanistan in 2006. Colbert created a "shout out" on his show to honor any servicemembers who sent him a flag. "I was loving that we were making these



guys laugh in these terrible conditions."

Beyond his show, Colbert had visited recovering troops at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and raised money for the Yellow Ribbon Fund, which helps injured veterans, and Donor's Choose, where

he helped raise funds for schools on military bases.

But a trip to Iraq was different. Colbert didn't know exactly how to ply his trade outside the studio. As a political satirist, his brand of humor might not be appropriate for a military

The host of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report," Stephen Colbert, talks to servicemembers on board an Air Force C17. Colbert participated in a USO/Armed Forces Entertainment tour in Iraq, June 5-11, 2009. (Photo by Steve Manuel)





audience. “You don’t want to satirize the troops,” explained Colbert. But if he had gone to Iraq without putting on his usual act, people would be disappointed. “That would be patronizing.” He just needed to figure out how to solve that puzzle.

The answer came six months later at a Donor’s Choose board meeting. Colbert asked one of the board members, who had been to Iraq, how the troops were doing. The man told him that their morale was good, but they were disappointed that no one was talking about them. The answer gave Colbert pause.

“We’re so busy navel-gazing and (worrying) about our 401(k)s,” he related. “And they’re putting their lives on the line and we’ve forgotten that we sent them over there.”

With that in mind, Colbert asked one of his researchers to prepare a chart tracing media stories about Iraq versus stories about the economy. “The chart looked like a butterfly,” Colbert explained, with stories crossing each other in September 2008, before the economy became the dominant topic. Colbert had his answer.



Stephen Colbert and Gen. Ray Odierno, then-commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, look on as President Barack Obama orders Odierno to give Colbert a buzz cut. (Photo by Sgt. Lindsey Bradford)

Stephen Colbert interviews special guest Gen. Ray Odierno, then-commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, for a special episode of “The Colbert Report.” (Photo by Sgt. Lindsey Bradford)





## the camera crew in tow...

"Now we have a reason to go," he realized, "because my character thinks it's over." He could tell the troops that people should remember they were still there, even if Iraq had fallen out of the headlines.

"I have this satirical conceit in which to say that, and I can be positive and patriotic about it," Colbert would go to Iraq to declare victory.

Colbert had another weapon in his humor arsenal: He could make fun of himself.

Before he flew to Iraq, he reported to Fort Jackson, S.C., with camera crew in tow, for 10 hours of training. Sgt. 1st Class Demetrius Chantz made the comedian run, do pushups and sit-ups, cross monkey bars, navigate an obstacle course, and rappel from the top of a tower. Colbert proved to be one of the worst trainees in the history of the Army, cracking jokes, complaining and singing throughout his workout. But the training was real.

"I was exhausted the whole time," admitted Colbert, who was 45 years old at the time. Terrified of heights, he was a bit shaky about climbing the tower before rappelling, but he knew it would make for great laughs. "If I didn't know it was going to be a great moment, I could have never have done it."

Chantz was the perfect foil for Colbert's character. "He was loud, direct and stone-faced," explained Colbert. There was no script—everything was improvised. "I made him laugh once," Colbert said, swelling with pride. "I shushed him."

### Into Iraq

Now fully trained, Colbert and part of his crew headed to Iraq. He was a little nervous about heading into a war zone, but as he departed his commercial flight in Kuwait and boarded a C17 Globemaster headed for Baghdad



Actor/comedian Stephen Colbert of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" visits with U.S. military personnel on a C17 Globemaster bound for Iraq. (Photo by Andrew Matheson)

Airport, he noticed the South Carolina flag painted on the aircraft's tail. As a child growing up in Charleston, he had seen military aircraft making touch-and-go landings at a nearby base and circling in the skies above. They had

the state's distinctive flag painted on their tails. Colbert suddenly felt safe. "These planes are from Charleston," he told his staff. "Everything's going to be fine."

After landing, Colbert worked



Drill sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Demetrius Chantz, an instructor at the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant School at Fort Jackson, S.C., corrects Pvt. Stephen Colbert. (Photo by Michael A. Glasch)



non-stop. He called the weeklong special "Operation Iraqi Stephen: Going Commando" and taped it from Camp Victory. He wore a special camouflage suit, complete with khaki shirt and tie and desert boots. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who had replaced Petraeus as the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, showed up to shave Colbert's head onstage at the behest of President Barack Obama, who appeared via a huge screen. When Colbert wasn't writing or taping the shows, he visited the troops.

Colbert shook so many service-members' hands that he developed tendinitis. "These were people in the prime of their health, and they were happy to see me and I was happy to see them," he explained. He shook an average of 800 hands in two hours. By the end of the week, he could barely squeeze a fork.

Colbert's hectic pace almost got him in trouble. While changing venues around Camp Victory he kept losing his security guards. "I was running everywhere I went and I'd turn around and go 'Oh no!' because my guard wouldn't be with me." He shook two bodyguards in two days. The Army had



Comedian Stephen Colbert prepares to host his Comedy Central show "The Colbert Report" in Iraq, in June 2009. (Photo by Andrew Matheson)

to take drastic measures.

First Lt. Lisa "Mouse" Turner, a morale, welfare and recreation officer, addressed the problem. "Sir," she called to Colbert in a no-nonsense voice, "I need to speak with you." He knew he had done wrong. "I'm kind of in trouble, aren't I?" he asked.

"Yes sir, you kind of are."

Then she introduced him to Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Tony Rizi and got right to the point. "You are

not to go anywhere without him, sir. If you do not take him with you, he is in trouble—with me. Do you want to get him in trouble?" Colbert was immediately contrite. "No, I don't."

"Alright," said Turner, "do we understand each other?" Colbert knew the right answer: "Yup, absolutely."

Rizi, who was also from South Carolina, escorted Colbert for his last five days in Iraq, never letting him out of his sight, except for bathroom

Pvt. Stephen Colbert rests atop one of the walls on the five-wall obstacle, rather than aiding his fellow Soldiers who helped him reach the top. (Photo by Michael A. Glasch)



You are not to go anywhere...



Stephen Colbert arrives at Fort Jackson, S.C., ready to report for Basic Combat Training. He gets off on the wrong foot when he asks his drill sergeant, "Can I get a bellman?" (Photo by Michael A. Glasch)

# Memories of Iraq

breaks. “He would stand right outside the door.” Rizi became more than just a security guard. Colbert also recruited him as a staff writer, constantly asking him, “Tony, what do you think of this joke?”

In fact, Colbert solicited input from just about any servicemember within arm’s reach. He would stop them, show them a joke relying on military jargon, and ask, “Does this mean anything?” And when they told him it did, he would follow up with, “Well, what does it mean?”

By the end of the week, Colbert and his team had delivered four episodes of his show to a cheering audience in battle dress uniforms. The show was a hit back in the U.S., averaging 1.8 million total viewers, the show’s highest ratings ever. People were reminded that the troops were still in Iraq, and doing well.

But the troops gave something back to Colbert, who had never served in the military and grew up in the

early 1970s, when the military was unpopular. Without realizing it, he had considered servicemembers different from himself. But after that week in Iraq, with constant exposure to men and women in uniform, something changed. “I had such an affectionate week there,” he explained. The appreciation he felt for the troops was equaled only by the appreciation they felt for him.

“That gratitude was so physical, I could almost see it hanging in the air between me and the people who I was doing my show for.” His appreciation dispelled something he did not know he had: the feeling that military people were different. “They are not,” said Colbert, seriously. “I could see myself in that life, and I could see them in my life.”

Colbert hoped that feeling would translate to his show’s young, urban audience, who would see that 18- and 19-year-olds serving overseas were no different from them. If that message

alone penetrated the American psyche, then the trip was worth it.

“That was one of the greatest gifts of that trip to me,” said Colbert. “It made me patriotic and made me proud to be an American in ways I had not experienced before, and did not know that I had not experienced.”

## Victory celebration

Colbert followed up his salute to the troops in Iraq a year later by welcoming home Iraq veterans with a victory celebration in his studio. For two days, Sept. 8 and 9, 2010, he taped special shows entitled “Been There, Won That: The Returnification of the Ameri-Can-Do Troopscapeon.” It included live satellite feeds to the non-combat troops at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, and the troops at Forward Operating Base Lagman in Afghanistan. Odierno returned and Colbert repaid his head shaving by presenting the general with a wig. Vice President Joe Biden showed up to serve hot dogs to the troops.

New York Army National Guard Soldiers pose with comedian Stephen Colbert in front of an M1117 Armored Security Vehicle at the Comedy Central studios in Manhattan. They are, from left: Capt. Shawn Tabankin, Staff Sgt. Kent Theobald, Sgt. Josuha Flint and Spc. Jeffrey Vucich. Theobald, Flint and Vucich participated in the opening segment of Colbert’s Sept. 8, 2010 program—a salute to troops who served in Iraq. Tabankin also appeared on the program. (Photo by Eric Durr)







(Left) Actor/comedian Stephen Colbert of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" speaks to servicemembers while aboard an Air Force C-17 Globemaster headed for Iraq. Colbert was part of a USO/Armed Forces Entertainment tour, June 5-11, 2009. (Photo by Steve Manuel)

Petraeus joined the celebration in a previously taped recording, saluting Colbert and his "Colbert Nation" (viewers who donate to the star's charities) with an Army commendation and lapel pin. Originally, Colbert did not want the award. "I want this show to be about the troops, not about me," he said at the time. "Although, my character would love it."

The Army compromised and

changed the commendation to read "Colbert Nation" instead. Petraeus appreciated the chance to show Colbert what the Army thought of him. "It was a pleasure to do it," he explained after the presentation. "It was an honor to help recognize Stephen and the team."

Today, Colbert and his character continue to honor the troops. Outside his studio, his security team asks if there are any servicemembers in the

audience line and gives them priority seating. Inside his office, military mementos adorn his walls, including an 82nd Airborne Division flag he received from an injured Soldier one night, when he addressed the treatment of veterans on his show. The Soldier's wife had to speak for him, and said, "Please don't stop talking about it (the plight of veterans)."

He won't. While Colbert knows that his character and show have become an iconic part of American culture, he wants to focus the limelight on those he finds more deserving: Americans in uniform, serving in harm's way far from home. ♦

*Kevin Hymel is the Research Director for Sovereign Media and a Historian/Tour Guide for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. He is also the author of "Patton's Photographs: War As He Saw It."*

Stephen Colbert poses with servicemembers at Camp Victory's Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, Iraq, June 5, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Lindsey Bradford)





### Afghanistan

Spc. David Walls, mine detection dog handler, 49th Engineer Detachment, works with Sgt. Homer, a mine-detection dog, as he sweeps Russian Grain Silo Combat Outpost, Kandahar, near a large power plant that supplies electricity to western Kandahar city.

— Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel Padilla









## Basic changes to improve combat readiness

**B**LIND obedience-oriented basic combat training is out; confidence-building and thought-oriented training is now in.

That's the bottom line of how Comprehensive Soldier Fitness is shaping changes in boot camp—changes that are improving Soldiers' combat preparedness once they reach their units, said Command Sgt. Maj. John R. Calpena, Initial Military Training Center of Excellence.

"When we went through basic, total control and fear of authority was taught—you could see the fear with that stupid look on their faces. Instead of creating obedient machines to do what they're told to do when they're told to do it, we're teaching our young Soldiers how to think, how to understand the circumstances and make decisions in stressful conditions because that's what's going on downrange," Calpena said.

"Young Soldiers receiving fire in a marketplace need to make an on-the-spot decision whether to shoot or not under stress," he continued. "We had to radically change the way drill sergeants teach to do this as well. They're no longer strictly disciplinarians, they've got to train Soldiers on tasks that are relevant to combat so when Soldiers graduate, they're ready to go into the fight, in a relatively short amount of time. Soldiers need to understand how the task is performed and how (they are) going to use this task in the fight. They really want to know. You don't have to force obedience into them. They want to be like us, they want to serve. They have heart.

"Some will perceive this as a lack of discipline. It's not. It's confidence," Calpena added.

Other CSF changes to basic training include improved physical



Two drill sergeants demonstrate combative training, now part of initial-entry training. (Photo by David Vergun)

readiness, proper nutrition and injury prevention, said Staff Sgt. Timothy E. Sarvis, assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He was selected as the active-duty 2010 Drill Sergeant of the Year.

"Soldiers need to prepare for combat the way athletes train for competition," Sarvis said. "This includes eating healthier foods and reducing injuries."

He said the new Army Physical Readiness Training manual, TC3-22.20, replaced FM 2120 as of Aug. 20. "The new manual stresses agility, flexibility, stability, speed, power, balance, coordination and posture. Complex tasks and movements prepare Soldiers for the operational forces," he said.

Several Soldiers demonstrated the physical movements trainees are now required to perform. Most of these movements are actually done on the battlefield, such as moving into and out of cover and concealment, crouch running, moving around and under obstacles, sprinting, jumping, explosive power and landing, according to one of the trainers.

Teaching culture, beliefs, values and behaviors is also part of basic training now that CSF is being used. "We used to train the seven core Army

values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage—using PowerPoint slides," said Sarvis. "This didn't hold their attention very well. Now we use interactive, scenario-based training, which allows Soldiers to interact with the videos, making decisions along the way and reinforced by the drill sergeants."

Resiliency training is an important aspect of basic. "It's a huge deal," said Sarvis, explaining Soldiers now need to bounce back from stress. He said trainees are given the Global Assessment Tool within the first 10 days of training and the Army then tracks how they improve or decline over their careers.

The GAT is a self-appraisal designed to boost personal growth, strengthen relationships and give Soldiers better coping skills for dealing with potentially traumatic events.

"Twenty-five percent of all drill sergeants are master-resiliency trained; they can help show how trainees can effectively deal with stress," Sarvis said.

Sarvis said Soldiers are using mobile applications, or apps, to download Army manuals and videos, which "reinforces training, not taking anything away from the drill sergeant." ♦

— David Vergun/ARNEWS



## Army expands MilGaming portal

**T**HE Army has expanded its MilGaming portal to include the latest version of Virtual BattleSpace 2, along with a suite of new PC-based training applications and tools.

Since the MilGaming portal launch a year ago, more than 12,000 people have spent more than 10,000 hours downloading game software and sharing user-created scenarios, models, terrains and videos. The site, <https://MilGaming.army.mil>, is open to anyone with a Department of Defense Common Access Card.

Now the site's playing field is even bigger. Updates to the portal include mobile applications that can be used with iPhones, iPads and Androids.

The expanded site includes Vignette Planning and Rehearsal Software, or ViPRS, a program that allows users to design and build scenarios that represent asymmetric aspects of conflict; and ELECT BiLAT, a 3-D simulation whereby players can practice meeting and negotiation skills.

Moral Combat, for example, injects players into a series of first-person, 3-D scenarios that challenge behavior and decision-making. There's also a suite of self-paced, in-



New games and virtual training tools are now available at the Army's MilGaming portal. (Photo illustration by David Vergun)

teractive foreign language programs to learn Arabic, Dari and Pashto.

The portal also includes forums where participants can share their experiences and offer lessons learned.

On tap for release in April is UrbanSim—a virtual training application for practicing battle command in counterinsurgency operations, while also focusing on the stability operations aspect of full-spectrum operations.

The portal is a joint venture between the Army Combined Arms Center-Training's National Simulation Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation, known as PEO STI, in Orlando, Fla.

"What the portal provides is the opportunity for people to share experiences, training techniques and best practices," said Col. Anthony Krogh, National Simulation Center director.

"I think, taking the big picture look, that gaming has been arguably one of the most cost-effective training devices we've used in the last five years and we only see the portal growing," he said.

The Army is starting to develop more games that focus on things beyond kinetic or shooter action, because it wants Soldiers to have the opportunity to train on missions where behaviors, mannerisms and cultural impact are just as important, Krogh said. ♦

— J.D. Leipold/ARNEWS

## Army to open off-post clinics

**O**VER the next few months, the Army plans to open a number of off-post medical clinics near major installations.

The first community-based medical home clinic was opened Nov. 30 near Fort Campbell, Ky. By April, Army Medical Command plans to have 17 of these clinics open.

Locations for the new clinics include sites near Fort Sill, Okla.; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Stewart, Ga.; forts Sam Houston and Hood, Texas; Fort Shafter, Hawaii; Fort Lewis, Wash.; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. and Fort Benning, Ga. Some posts will be serviced by more than one such clinic.

MEDCOM will be leasing the clinic space and tailoring it to meet the medical home model, rather than building new facilities, said Lt. Col. Bradley Lieurance, program manager for the community-based primary care clinic initiative.

Clinics will be housed in spaces ranging from office buildings to strip malls, he said.

The concept for community-based medical home clinics began when the Army realized it would need to provide

health care access to an increasing number of Soldiers and their Families who are being relocated as part of Base Realignment and Closure.

"At many of our Army installations, we have limited space, and military construction takes a considerable amount of time...we don't have the four-to-five years that it takes to complete a military construction project to adequately take care of the patients," said Lieurance.

The medical home clinic is a good solution to providing care for more beneficiaries without overloading Army hospitals, Lieurance said.

The clinics, which will each be able to accommodate about 8,100 enrolled patients, are primarily for the Families of Soldiers, said Lieurance.

Each off-post clinic will have 35 staff members: seven doctors or physicians' assistants, one behavioral health practitioner, four registered nurses, 16 licensed practical nurses, three administrative personnel, one pharmacist, one pharmacy technician and two lab technicians. ♦

— Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown/  
ARNEWS



# FROM HOSPITAL TO HOLLYWOOD: a Soldier's story

Story by Elizabeth M. Collins

**I**N the glitz and glamour of Hollywood, appearance is almost everything and plastic surgery—to achieve the perfect body, the perfect face, and perfect skin—is commonplace if tabloids and TV shows can be believed.

So, as soap opera star J.R. Martinez of “All My Children” sees it, he fits right in. After all, he’s had more than 30 surgeries. The only difference between Martinez and other young actors: Instead of getting a nose job or Botox shots from high-priced Beverly

Hills surgeons, Martinez spent more than two years at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, undergoing skin grafts and treatments for burns that covered 40 percent of his body.

That’s because Martinez—who plays Brody Tipton, an Army veteran



J.R. Martinez as a young private, shortly after joining the Army, and before sustaining burns over 40 percent of his body in a 2003 landmine blast in Iraq. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)



J.R. Martinez in the burn ward at Brooke Army Medical Center, about three months after a landmine blast in Iraq left 40 percent of his body covered in third degree burns. He said the debridement to remove the dead skin and scar tissue was more painful than the initial injury. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)

(Left) An Army plastic surgeon at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio preps J.R. Martinez for plastic surgery. The marker helped him know where to make incisions. To date, Martinez has undergone 33 operations. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)



(Copyright / photo removed)

J.R. Martinez as wounded war veteran Brot Monroe, who is now on the fictional Pine Valley, Pa., police force, and his future love interest/coworker Shannon Kane as Natalia, in a scene that aired the week of July 26, 2010, on "All My Children." Natalia surprised Brot with donuts to cheer him up before an upcoming surgery. The show's writers had written Martinez's real-life eyelid surgery into the script, and explored Brot's pain and anger at facing yet another operation. (Copyright © 2010 ABC Studios/Patrick Wymore. Reprinted with permission.)

(Copyright / photo removed)

J.R. Martinez as Brot Monroe on ABC's "All My Children." Brot is an injured war veteran, who was originally willing to let his fiancée believe he was dead, rather than let her see his scars. (Copyright © 2008 ABC Studios/Donna Svennevik. Reprinted with permission.)

burned in combat—used to be Cpl. J.R. Martinez of the 101st Airborne Division. He deployed to Iraq during the initial invasion in March 2003 at the age of 19, only six months after enlisting, still so green he wasn't sure he could find Iraq on a map. Less than a month later, Apr. 5, the front left tire of the Humvee he was driving hit a landmine. Three other Soldiers were thrown from the vehicle and sustained mostly minor injuries, but he was trapped inside.

Minutes before, he and the Soldier riding shotgun had been joking about how cool it would be to get a Purple Heart and not have to wait in line at restaurants back in the States. "The things you say and never think it's going to lead to anything," he remembered, "because humor is the biggest thing you've got to maintain while

you're over there. That's what keeps you going."

But it wasn't cool, and instead of laughing, he was soon screaming for help as smoke filled the Humvee and flames consumed him. "It's going to end for me. This is it," he thought. Raised by a single mother, Maria Zavala, who had emigrated from El Salvador and had already lost one child, he realized that there was no way he could put her through that again. He had to hang on. By the time his buddies were able to get him out (Martinez later learned insurgents had attacked their convoy as soon as the landmine went off), 10 or 15 minutes had gone by and, conscious the entire time, he was in unspeakable pain.

"It's really hard to explain," Martinez said. "You know how you burn yourself on an iron or stove and how

painful that is, or maybe a sunburn, and the pain is just excruciating? This was just on-another-world-, on-another-universe-painful. It was just so far beyond what I had ever known and what I've ever experienced...that there's no way to explain it. It's an unbearable pain. Burns are something I would never wish upon my worst enemy."

The third-degree burns were so deep, and he lost so much fluid and tissue, that after a while, they destroyed the nerves. The smoke damage was so severe that his lungs and other organs began to shut down. Martinez was put in a medically induced coma for the pain—that and because he kept trying to touch his face, thinking he could make it feel cooler. One of the medics later told him that he had to be strapped to his bed at the evacuation hospital after he bounced up and told

everyone to leave him alone because he was "fine." In reality, when he arrived at BAMC four days later, doctors still weren't sure if he would make it, and kept him in the coma for almost three weeks.

After he came out of it, he remained completely dependant on others for weeks, and nurses escorted him to the showers every morning for debridement (removing the dead, scarred skin), which Martinez said was even more painful than the initial burns. But after several days of the torture, he became suspicious: "What the hell is going on? Why is this so painful? What does it hurt so much?" he thought, and demanded to see a mirror, although his doctors and nurses were vehemently opposed. They thought it was too soon and would be traumatic, but Martinez insisted.

"I want to see my face. I want to see my body, now," he told them, explaining that he was the one who would have to live with it for the rest of his life. Why bother putting it off? It would be just as devastating later, so surely it was better to get it over with. When they finally agreed and sat him in front of a mirror, the sight of his face, neck and hands was a shock that sent him into a depression so deep, he began to wonder if he would have been better off dying in that Humvee.

The life he had dreamed of was certainly back in its burned out shell. At the age of 19, he was no longer the handsome young athlete everyone had talked about, and he no longer knew how he would ever find a girlfriend, let alone get married or have children. "I just felt, looking at my body, there's no way I'm ever going to be able to



(Above & below) Different angles of J.R. Martinez about three months after he survived 10-15 minutes trapped in a burning Humvee in Iraq. He spent three weeks in a medically induced coma, and woke up to a painful, confusing world of debridement and hidden mirrors, then devastation when he demanded to see his face. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)



(Above right) J.R. Martinez recovering from one of his 33 surgeries about a year after his initial injury, with his mother Maria Zavala at his side. Martinez calls her his best friend and credits her with snapping him out of the depression he sunk into when he realized the extent of the burns that covered his body. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)





experience that. My life was spared, but for what?"

Martinez grieved for the man he had been, only going through the motions of his recovery, wondering what he had done to deserve such a punishment, until about five weeks after he had arrived at the hospital when his mother—who had gone through her own ordeal watching her only son face death and disfigurement—snapped him out of it. She explained that he had a lot to learn about life. Looks weren't everything. In fact, she joked, she was proof.

"People are going to be in your life for who you are as a person and not what you look like," she told him. "I remember when I was younger, everyone told me I was pretty and gave me compliments. No one tells me that now."

Something clicked and Martinez immediately answered, "You know what, Mom? You're right. And now, I'm actually glad this happened to me."

"Wait a minute, what do you mean you're happy?"

"Now I get to see who liked me as a person, versus who liked me for being the popular guy in school, being the athlete, being the handsome young man. Now I get to see who really loves me or likes me for who I am as a person," he said. In that instant he understood, and he suddenly had a new mission.

Between his 32 (eventually 33) surgeries, and therapies to stretch his tender, growing skin (he even had to wear a mask to compress the scarring on his face), Martinez began to visit other, newly wounded servicemembers on the wards at BAMC. They too were often badly burned, some with faces that had been nearly charred off. They too were devastated and sometimes didn't want to go on living, but Martinez noticed that after he talked to them, they seemed to cope a little better.

"I said to myself, 'I think this is my gift. I'm going to share my gift with other wounded troops because a lot of these guys are arriving here without a clue of what to expect. I've been through it. Maybe I can just kind of help them and prepare them on what

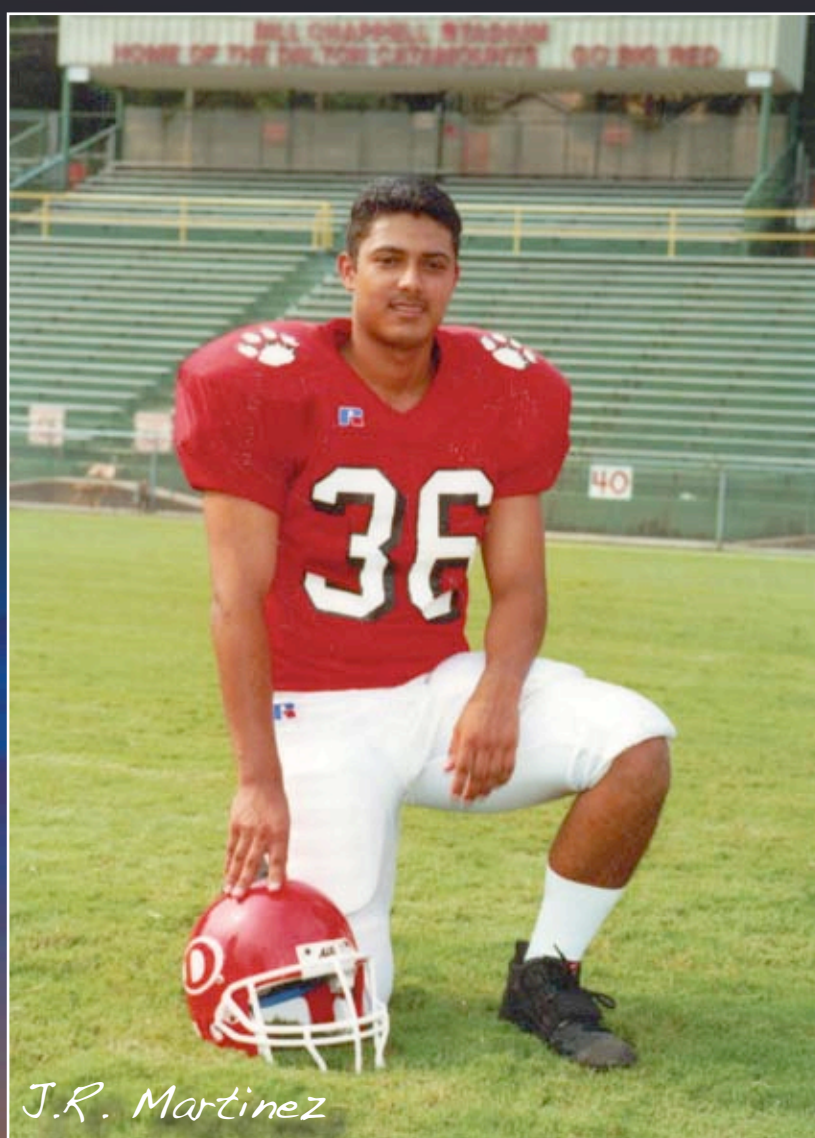
to expect.' So I started visiting patients on the wards every day," he explained.

The local and then national media began to pick up his story, and before he knew it, he was in the Washington Post and on "60 Minutes" and "Oprah," talking about hope and renewal, explaining that if wounded warriors could just find the strength they had in battle, or even when they enlisted, they could make it through this war too.


Due to his heavy scarring, Martinez is used to getting some strange looks when he hits the streets, and he wants injured servicemembers, burn victims and other people with disfigurements

to know that that's OK. In fact, he embraces the strange looks, and if someone wants to ask about his scars, that's fine too, because Martinez views the looks and questions as opportunities to educate people about true beauty.

"We have the power," he explained. "The more we sit there, the more we accept the unfortunate things that have happened...the more we embrace those things and own them, we have the power to actually change the mindset and allow these people to be completely comfortable with scarring, with disfigurement. But what we have to do...is go out to the public. We can't be afraid. We have to step up and say



The "handsome, popular athlete" J.R. Martinez remembers being liked for before he joined the Army and suffered burns over 40 percent of his body in Iraq. Today, he's thankful that he knows who likes him for him. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)



(Copyright / photo removed)

J.R. Martinez as Brot Monroe on ABC Daytime's "All My Children." Brot is an injured war veteran, who was originally willing to let his fiancée believe he was dead, rather than let her see his scars. (Copyright © 2010 ABC Studios/Donna Svennevik. Reprinted with permission.)

we're going to go out there, because the more they see, the more they start to say, 'OK, you know what? There's nothing wrong with it. It's unfortunate, but it's kind of common.'"

In 2006, when one of his noncommissioned officers urged him to stay in the Army and continue motivating other Soldiers after he was finally discharged from BAMC, Martinez explained that his new uniform was his scarred skin, and his new weapons were his words. He spent two years doing motivational speaking and nonprofit work for wounded troops, and then one day in 2008 he got an e-mail: "All My Children" had decided to launch a short-term storyline about the difficulties returning veterans faced, and thought it might be interesting to cast the role with a real veteran. Martinez had no acting experience, but he had done hundreds of speaking events at

that point, and figured he had nothing to lose by auditioning.

Getting the role of Brot Monroe, who had let his fiancée and family believe he was dead rather than let them see his scars, was surreal to Martinez, especially because during his recovery at BAMC, while forced to watch his mother's telenovelas every night from his hospital bed, he had joked with her that he would be on a soap one day. He already knew the plot and everything: Man gets beautiful girl. Man is in car accident or fire. Girl visits man in hospital. Man turns out to be Martinez. Martinez gets beautiful girl.

Things have been far from that straightforward for Brot as he struggles to come to terms with his scars and civilian life in fictional Pine Valley, Pa., but he has connected with audiences. Martinez's three-month stint became a long-term contract, with Brot joining

the local police force, and even finding possible romance with a beautiful lady detective. The show's writers and producers, Martinez said, try to be as accurate as possible, and give him a lot of input. They even incorporated his 33rd surgery last summer to fix one of his eyelids into "All My Children's" storyline.

While his character carries a lot of anger and grief, and occasionally lashes out at friends and coworkers, Martinez hasn't found those scenes to be especially painful, explaining that because he has already worked through his own pain, he can go to that place for the scene and then turn his emotions off. Many viewers are actually surprised that he's a real veteran and not a regular actor wearing heavy makeup, waiting for a "miracle" plastic surgery cure.

"I remember one day sitting in Grand Central Station (in New York), waiting for a friend, and all of a sudden



Headshot of J.R. Martinez today. He plays injured veteran Broton Monroe on the daytime soap "All My Children" and does a lot of motivational speaking. The wristwatch tattoo represents a cheap watch he was wearing that kept his wrist from being burned during the landmine blast. It shows the date, day and time he was hurt. (Photo courtesy of J.R. Martinez)

a guy's walking by and he said, 'Are you guys filming a scene here?' At first it's understandable that people think it's makeup because TV does crazy things. However, it's nice for people to understand and learn over time that it's real and become educated about it," Martinez explained, adding that "All My Children" is a great way for him to educate people about wounded Soldiers and motivate people going through their own battles.

Martinez is writing a book about his experiences, and hopes to have his own talk show some day. In the meantime, he still does a host of motivational speaking and charity work on behalf of wounded troops, who he'll often invite to the show's new Los Angeles set (the show, and Martinez, just moved to LA from New York). In time-honored military tradition, once they've finished making fun of him for acting on a soap opera, and bonding over shared experiences, Martinez explains that it might be his name and face out there, but that's it. He's out there for them. They inspire him. He's been home from war for seven years, so recently returning vets are fighting for his freedom as much as anyone else's, and he has a debt to repay.

"Although a lot of these guys say that I inspire them, a lot of them inspire me," Martinez said. "When I'm having a bad day, I just think about a lot of them, and I just think, 'What am I sitting here complaining about? These guys have gone through so much more.'" ♦

**Editor's note:** *Opinions expressed are Martinez's own. Neither Soldiers magazine, the U.S. Army nor the Defense Media Activity endorse "All My Children."*





# A poignant way to honor the fallen

Story by Rob McIlvaine

# WEARING MEMORIES







Donna Engeman, Army Survivor Outreach Services, got inked four years after losing her husband, Chief Warrant Officer John Engeman, in Iraq, May 2006. (Photo by Slade Walters)

**Editors note:** Portions of this story have been excerpted with permission from “Surviving the Folded Flag: Parents of war share stories of coping, courage, and faith,” by Deborah H. Tainsh, a Gold Star Mother. For Tainsh’s story, see the May 2008 issue of *Soldiers*, available online at [www.army.mil/soldiers/archives](http://www.army.mil/soldiers/archives).

**H**UMANS have marked their bodies with tattoos for more than 5,000 years, from the famous Iceman who was carbon-dated at around 5,200 years old, to royal Egyptian women, and Soldiers fighting in the trenches of Fallujah, Baghdad and Kabul.

Over the past millennium, these permanent, very personal designs, have served as amulets, status symbols, declarations of love, signs of religious beliefs, adornments and even forms of punishment.

But for today’s Soldiers and Families, a tattoo has become a statement to the world that someone close to them has fallen, whether a comrade, father, husband, son or daughter.

Donna Engeman, currently the Survivor Outreach Services program manager at the Army’s Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, lost her husband Chief Warrant Officer John Engeman in Iraq, May 2006.

“For me the ‘inking’ began about three years ago when I was going through airport security during a trip for work. There was a Soldier in uniform going through the line in front of me and the security guard thanked him profusely for his service, which was certainly very appropriate. Yet, when I went through the line, proudly wearing my tiny little Gold Star pin, there was not a word of acknowledgement for my husband’s service and sacrifice,” Engeman said.

Donna knows she doesn’t have any outward signs of her loss—she hasn’t lost a limb or other body part, she says.

“My heart, though, was absolutely shattered and virtually ripped out, but it continues to beat as I live on without him. I don’t know if there’s a strong enough word to describe how



important it is to me that our nation know and remember John's sacrifice—such a good and honorable man who lived and died for our nation and our freedom. No matter where I go or what I do from here, I will always, always make sure he is remembered. It is the very least I can do for him,” Engeman said.

While struggling to figure a way to keep his memory alive, she decided on a tattoo. It would not get lost or fall apart in the laundry as some pins do, and it is permanent.

“I chose to have the Gold Star pin put over a heart to symbolize my shattered heart and the pin from a grateful nation, and I wanted his dog tags and chain wrapped around it all to illustrate his devotion to duty. But I wanted the circular chain broken to symbolize that only death would separate us. And I chose to put it on my left shoulder be-

cause it is closest to my heart,” she said.

This skin-deep inking of the body first gained acceptability in mainstream culture because of the military.

During World War II, tattooing came to be seen as the sign of a tough guy, or “man of the world,” when Soldiers, Sailors and Marines traveled the world, making contact with cultures that practiced the art form. Being willing to fight and die for one's country is very noble, so tattoos gained a bit of credibility.

Today, it's not uncommon to see suburban housewives, lawyers and accountants getting ink—not at the tattoo parlor that glorifies the urban outlaw—but at the tattoo art studio that features custom, fine-art designs, as seen on TV shows like “Miami Ink” and “LA Ink.”

With tattooing riding a wave of popularity within the

17- to 24-year-old age group, the rising tide of ink for male and female tattoo enthusiasts is quickly flooding the military service recruitment pool.

According to a Pew Research Center report, of those born after 1980, 31 percent have one tattoo, 50 percent have two to five, and 9 percent have six or more tattoos. But however many they have, most adults don't display them for the entire world to see.

For those in the military or Family members of the armed services, this hidden art is coming out of the shadows.

Captain Patrick J. Engeman, Donna and John's son, who served twice in Iraq after losing his father, decided to wear his tattoo in memory of his dad on his sleeve, so to speak.

“I originally had a KIA bracelet made for my dad, and that is what I used to wear all the time. But the bracelet kept getting scratched up and caught on my gear and was getting in pretty bad shape. I decided I wanted

to get a tattoo instead of the bracelet,” Engeman said.

His original plan was to essentially have the bracelet tattooed on his wrist

“I really liked the





KIA bracelet and the information on it, so it seemed perfect. I brought my idea to a local parlor that has a really good reputation. I like the artists because they are very good at taking an idea and developing a tattoo from it,” Engeman said.

The artist found that the size and detail of the warrant eagle and ordinance crest, the featured elements of the design, required a much larger template.

“When I saw the design he came up with, I knew that’s what I wanted. I chose my right forearm because that was where I used to wear the bracelet. I had thought about doing something on my chest over my heart, but I kind of wanted people to be able to see it.

“I really didn’t discuss it with any of my family or friends. I had told my mom and sister that I wanted to get one for my dad but wasn’t sure what to get. But when I saw the design I knew they would both really like it,” Engeman said.

Dianne Layfield still isn’t sure about getting a tattoo, although nearly everyone in her family has been inked, including her son, Marine Lance Cpl. Travis Layfield, killed in Anbar Province, Iraq, April 6, 2004.

“Travis had a tribal feather tattoo to represent his Lakota Sioux heritage on his father’s side. My son, Tyler,



Bill Evans takes a photo of his own reflection on his son’s tombstone. (Photo courtesy of Bill Evans)

preserved his brother’s legacy by getting a feather tattooed on his arm right after we received the news. At Travis’s funeral services a Lakota medicine man, who played drums and sang, asked me if I knew what the feather meant. I told him I thought it meant ‘first born.’ He said, ‘No, it means fallen warrior.’ I still get chills remembering this. I think Travis must have known,” Layfield said.

His brother, Tyler, never wanted a tattoo because he didn’t like them, said his mother. But when his grandfather, a Navy Seabee, died, he decided to get

the Seabee emblem tattooed on his shoulder. He also got Travis’ dog tags tattooed around his neck and then completed a sleeve of tattoos.

“Tyler has been working on this sleeve for so long, but he wanted everything a perfect tribute to his brother,” she said.

“Travis’ older brother, Todd, who’s in Arkansas, got a tattoo of the USMC emblem and the bulldog mascot. And my niece got Travis’ feather tattooed on the top of her foot. Now everyone’s saying it’s my turn to get one in memory of my Travis. I’m not so sure, yet,” Layfield said.

Specialist William Lee Evans was on patrol in Ramadi, Iraq, when the vehicle he was travelling in was struck by an IED. Still alive but unconscious, Billy was medevaced to Baghdad, where he died from his injuries.

“Billy deployed to Iraq on Jan. 22, 2005. He and his buddies said to each other, ‘We have a job to do, so let’s go over there and kick some butt, get it done, and come home.’ And that’s what they did. Some just didn’t return to their Families,” Bill L. Evans, Billy’s dad, said.

Billy’s parents learned about their son’s death on a cloudy and unusually warm day eight months after his deployment, seven days after his 22nd birthday.

“I had just climbed into bed after working the third shift with maintenance at the local school. My wife had

(Below) Bill Evans got inked on both arms after losing his son, Spc. William “Billy” Lee Evans in Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of Bill Evans)



Roberta Stewart (left) lost her husband, Sgt. Patrick D. Stewart, to an insurgent’s rocket-propelled grenade. She holds an artist’s rendering of Patrick. A closeup of her forearm tattoo is below. (Photos courtesy of Roberta Stewart)







Tyler Layfield (left, right and dog tag tattoo photo opposite page) wears many tattoos to honor his brother, Marine Lance Cpl. Travis Layfield. (Photos courtesy of Tyler Layfield)



left to take care of an elderly man with Alzheimer's and our son Josh was at work at the local auto parts store. The doorbell rang and then someone began knocking. I finally got up and pushed open the curtains.

"There stood two Soldiers in Class-A uniforms. I knew immediately why they were there. When I opened the door, my first words were, 'I hope you're not here to give me bad news.' But there they were telling me my first-born son had been killed by an IED in Iraq. Crying, I collapsed as they comforted me the best they could before driving me to my wife's work,"

Evans said. "When the notification of-ficers arrived at the door," said Judy Evans Parker, "I told them there was no need to tell me what I already knew. My son had called me from sleep early that morning by sending my guardian angel to tell me he was gone. I felt life leave him. I felt his weakness and blood drain from him. A mother knows when her child needs her. Thousands of miles between us and we still know," she said.

In memory of Billy, his dad got a tattoo inked into each arm. He also had a camera carved on Billy's headstone, to symbolize their shared passion for photography.

"I have all his medals and ribbons in the living room for everyone to see. Photographs of Billy remain in our home plus the flag, dog tags, and

awards. Keeping his personal items in sight reminds me that his service and death was a sacrifice he made for all of us," Evans said.

Iraqi insurgents captured Staff Sgt. Matt Maupin, April 9, 2004, after his convoy came under attack by rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire near Baghdad.

His mom, Carolyn Maupin, began to consider getting inked, but was a bit hesitant.

"My daughter Lee Ann got tattoos while she was in college and I was not too pleased with her. But this past year I began to think of getting a tattoo, too. So I asked everyone who had one if it hurt. To my surprise, most said it didn't," she said.

Carolyn gave herself the deadline of Memorial Day, 2010 to have one completed.

"During the four hours it took, I had Matt's chain on with his dog tag that has his picture so when it hurt I would say, 'Matt, if you can do for me what you did, I can surely do this.' Even during the process, I felt closer to Matt. Even though he can't be here with me, this tattoo symbolizes his physical presence. There is a hole in my heart that will never be filled. Our fallen should never be forgotten. The tattoo opens conversation so that I may tell Matt's story," Maupin said.

Sergeant Patrick D. Stewart died in combat in Afghanistan when insur-



gents used a rocket-propelled grenade to shoot down his Chinook helicopter, Sept. 25, 2005. His wife, Roberta, was able to complete the tattoo in his honor in three sessions over six months, before the five-year anniversary of his death.

"I started to feel numb and decided on getting the first of 12 tattoos because I wanted to feel the pain. It makes me happy I'm doing something in memory of him," Stewart said recently at a Survivor Outreach Services summit in Arlington, Va.

Her tattoo, located on her leg, is a crying eagle whose tears create a waterfall that flows down over the Chinese emblem for dreams and into a pond with a four-leaf clover for better luck.

"The pain was unbearable on my ankle. The bone hurt the most," she said. "It represents the sacrifices my husband made and gives me a better connection with his spiritual realm,"

For more than 5,000 years these permanent designs have continued to serve as amulets, status symbols, declarations of love and signs of religious beliefs. But during the past 10 years of persistent conflict, this tradition is gaining wider acceptance as a way to remember.

For Soldiers, battle buddies and Family members, getting inked has become a statement to the world that someone close to them has fallen. It makes no difference how they fell, only that their memory will live on for all to see. ❖



Carolyn Maupin wears a tattoo in memory of her son, Staff Sgt. Matt Maupin. (Photo courtesy of the Maupin Family)

## ARMY TATTOO POLICY

*With the growing popularity of tattoos, the Army revised its policy four years ago with Army Regulation 670-1.*

*The change was made because Army officials realized the number of potential recruits bearing skin art had grown enormously over the years.*

*About 30 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 have tattoos, according to a Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey. For those under age 25, the number is about 28 percent. In all, the post-baby-boom generations are more than three times as likely as boomers to have tattoos.*

*As a result of tattoo attitude changes, Army Regulation 670-1, chapter 1-8E (1) has been modified via an ALARACT 017/2006 message.*

*Additionally, paragraph 1-8B (1) (A) was revised to state: "Tattoos that are not extremist, indecent, sexist or racist are allowed on the hands and neck. Initial entry determinations will be made according to current guidance."*

*The new policy allows recruits and all Soldiers to sport tattoos on the neck behind an imaginary line straight down and back of the jawbone, provided the tattoos don't violate good taste. ❖*







# Chow down

Story by Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Photos courtesy of Capt. Nicholas Barringer

## *First Ranger-qualified Army dietitian helps Soldiers shape up*

ONE glance at Capt. Nicholas Barringer's uniform and it is immediately apparent that he is not an average Army dietitian.

Metal jump wings rest above his "U.S. Army" service tape, and the often-vacant space above his unit scroll is home to a muted green Ranger tab.

Barringer, from Kingsport, Tenn., is the Army's first Ranger-qualified dietitian, and is helping change the way Rangers train, work and operate by looking at how they fill their stomachs.

With the adoption of the Ranger Athlete Warrior, or RAW program in 2005, the Ranger community brought on a team of military and civilian medical professionals rivaling that of an NFL team. Barringer, currently stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., with the 75th Ranger Regiment, is part of the medical equation striving to make Rangers an even more elite fighting force.

"It's about treating Rangers like athletes, which they are," Barringer said of the RAW program. "Anyone who

relies on their body for a living is an athlete."

Barringer adds to the team by leading classes on proper nutrition, coaching Soldiers with specific dietary goals and suggesting dining facility menu changes. He also researches new physical training techniques, such as kettlebell training, and teaches weightlifting classes.

As a student at the University of Georgia, Barringer said his plan was to be a strength coach, but found that he liked his nutrition classes better. Earning his degree and commission in 2003, Barringer's first assignment was as an evacuation platoon leader at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Barringer had originally applied for the Army's dietitian program while still in college, but due to a filing mix-up, his application wasn't correctly processed. While at Fort Drum, he looked into the program again, and this time was picked up.

During a nine-month internship at Brook Army Medical Center in

San Antonio, Texas, Barringer went through clinical rotations including renal nutrition, cardio-vascular, diabetic care and food service. Upon completing his internship, Barringer passed the Registered Dietitian national exam and became one of about 150 dietitians in the Army. (Note: the words "dietitian" and "nutritionist" are not interchangeable—dietitian is a credentialed title, nutritionist is not).

Barringer was then assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, but soon volunteered for a deployment to Iraq. While working at a Combat Support Hospital there in 2006, he received a call from a colleague about the RAW program with the 75th Ranger Regiment.

"There was an opportunity to work with the Rangers, and of course I immediately jumped at it," he explained.

For Barringer, working for the 75th Ranger Regiment meant attending the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, the Basic Airborne Course and the U.S. Army Ranger Course within a matter of months. Barringer also re-





**Capt. Nicholas Barringer, far left, directs Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division during a Ranger Athlete Warrior workout at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in 2010.**

cently completed Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape training where instructors shouted at him during an interrogation exercise to tell them his real job—they didn't believe he was a dietitian.

Although the training's been tough, Barringer said he is just glad to have the chance to do what few in the Army's field of medicine have done.

"Ranger slots at a hospital are pretty much non-existent," Barringer noted.

Major Robert D. Montz, the Regimental occupational therapist for the 75th Ranger Regiment and Barringer's colleague in the RAW program, explained that it was important for Barringer to complete the training Rangers go through in order to understand the kind of nutrition these elite Soldiers need.

"Ranger School and SERE school have been instrumental in Capt. Barringer's success in the Regiment," Montz said. "It shows his fellow Rangers that he truly appreciates and understands the physical and mental demands of Rangering, and how nutrition can impact their ability to accomplish the mission."

Normally as a dietitian, Barringer would be either assigned a position working with hospital patients or running a hospital's dining facility—each Army hospital has a dietitian to tailor meal plans for patients with diet restrictions.

Barringer is trained in calculating the nutritional formulas for feeding tubes for patients who cannot eat, calculating Soldiers' body fat, and helping

those who want to lose or gain weight do so healthfully. In a hospital setting, one of Barringer's main roles would be giving Soldiers who do not meet the Army's height and weight standards guidance on how to become more fit.

"Every Soldier who's failed a tape test, by regulation, has to see a dietitian," he said.

Sometimes without the assistance of a professional, he explained, people can become frustrated when they don't see the weight-loss results they expect.

For example, Barringer said one Soldier came to him with more body fat than he wanted, and Barringer gave him a nutrition plan to work on. When the Soldier returned to Barringer's office, he was disappointed: He had exercised and worked hard at eating healthfully, but had only lost 1 pound. But Barringer checked the Soldier's body composition and found that he had actually lost 5 pounds of fat, and gained 4 pounds of muscle.

"The addition of a dietitian has



(Far Left) Capt. Nicholas Barringer administers a skinfold test to a fellow Ranger during his deployment to Iraq in 2006.

(Left) Barringer returns from a Ranger mission in Iraq in 2006.

(Right) Barringer, far left, directs 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division Soldiers as they complete a truck tire relay at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in 2010.

been instrumental in helping Rangers delineate fact from fiction with regards to human performance and nutrition,” explained Montz of Barringer’s role.

Barringer explained that the four pillars of the RAW program are functional fitness, performance nutrition, sports medicine and mental toughness. His area of expertise is performance nutrition.

Barringer is also a certified strength and conditioning specialist, which is a nationally recognized credential in strength training.

“I think that’s where dietitians and physical therapists can work very well together,” Barringer said of the nutrition-fitness overlap.

Barringer spends much of his time at the 75th Ranger Regiment traveling to combat zones and throughout the country wherever Rangers are stationed, to check in on their fitness and nutrition levels. As a strength trainer, he often holds physical training classes with Rangers to teach them new exercise methods he’s learned.

“If you think about any time a Soldier picks up an ammo can and puts

it on the back of a truck, they are doing resistance training,” Barringer explained. “You don’t want that to be the first time they’ve ever lifted something.”

Rangers are a unique type of athlete, he noted, because of their high operational tempo, they might have to carry casualties for long distances, sprint, conduct an airborne insertion, or patrol on foot for days.

“It’s hard to find an athlete that mirrors what a Soldier does. For example, an offensive lineman is never going to have to run 2 miles in his sport...it’s a broad range to train for.”

Since coming on board, Barringer has also implemented the purchase of three BOD POD systems—a highly effective body fat composition machine.

He uses the BOD POD to measure Soldiers’ body fat, but also as nutritional information tool. He calculates Rangers’ body composition before and after deployments, and students before and after they complete Ranger school to see what the training does to their bodies.

“What we like to do is get a baseline to track the guys over time, and

to see where their bodies optimally perform at,” Barringer explained.

He said most Rangers currently in the Army have received a body fat composition reading from one of the BOD POD systems, and for the past three years he’s put all of the Regiment’s Best Ranger competitors through the machine.

However, body fat isn’t such a problem for most of the Rangers Barringer works with, as the physical standards for the infantry’s finest are higher than for other Soldiers. More often, he fields questions about the safe use of dietary supplements.

Barringer said an Army survey revealed that Rangers as a group had the highest use of dietary supplements compared to other troops.

“They might be more willing to take a dietary supplement without really thinking about the risk,” he explained, noting that for Rangers, risk is in their job description.

He said his primary piece of advice for Soldiers interested in dietary supplements is to read about the supplement’s nutritional information.





"It amazes me. That's one of the biggest things that people don't do," he said of reading labels. "That's step one—my very first slide in my nutrition class is about reading labels."

As part of his job, Barringer monitors product recalls and warnings about supplements that can cause unwanted side effects, and keeps Rangers up-to-date.

Barringer is also helping shake up the Regiment's dining facility menu by adding some healthier options, but he admits it isn't an easy task. He has helped push for a larger selection of fruit and a bigger salad bar, which he made sure is front and center. "The first thing you are going to see when you walk into a Ranger Regiment dining facility is the salad bar or fruit," he said.

He's also gotten rid of fried foods and replaced them with more baked options. For example, Barringer recently replaced fried Tater Tots with baked sweet-potato tots, and claims they are delicious. He's also interested in bringing in more Omega-3 fatty acid-rich fish, which is said to protect the brain against Traumatic Brain Injury.

However, he said he's being careful not to make the dining facility completely fat-free.

"A Soldier can always choose to go to McDonald's or Burger King instead...that's one of the things you have to be careful with. We still want guys to eat here."

But if Barringer had his way, fast food wouldn't be a meal option for Soldiers, and neither would soda.

Soda, his biggest pet peeve, is a pitfall for those trying to lose weight, he said, because people rarely count liquid calories. He warned that just two 20 ounce sodas per day can add up to 1 pound in gained fat per week.

"There have been studies that show we don't register the calories that we drink...if I had you eat 500 extra calories per day, chances are you would reduce your food intake to adjust," he explained.

Barringer also warned against the myth that juice is "healthy." He said he would rather have Soldiers eat a piece of fruit rather than drink fruit juice because of the high sugar content.

"Ounce-for-ounce, orange juice has

the same amount of calories as coca-cola," he warned.

What he does recommend are five to six smaller meals throughout the day, heavy on fruits, vegetables, lean proteins (such as baked chicken) and whole grains.

He also wants Soldiers to eat foods with bright colors—a bland palate denotes bland nutrition.

"Fuel your activity," added Barringer. "Don't skip meals if you can help it. You have to keep your blood glucose even so you don't overeat."

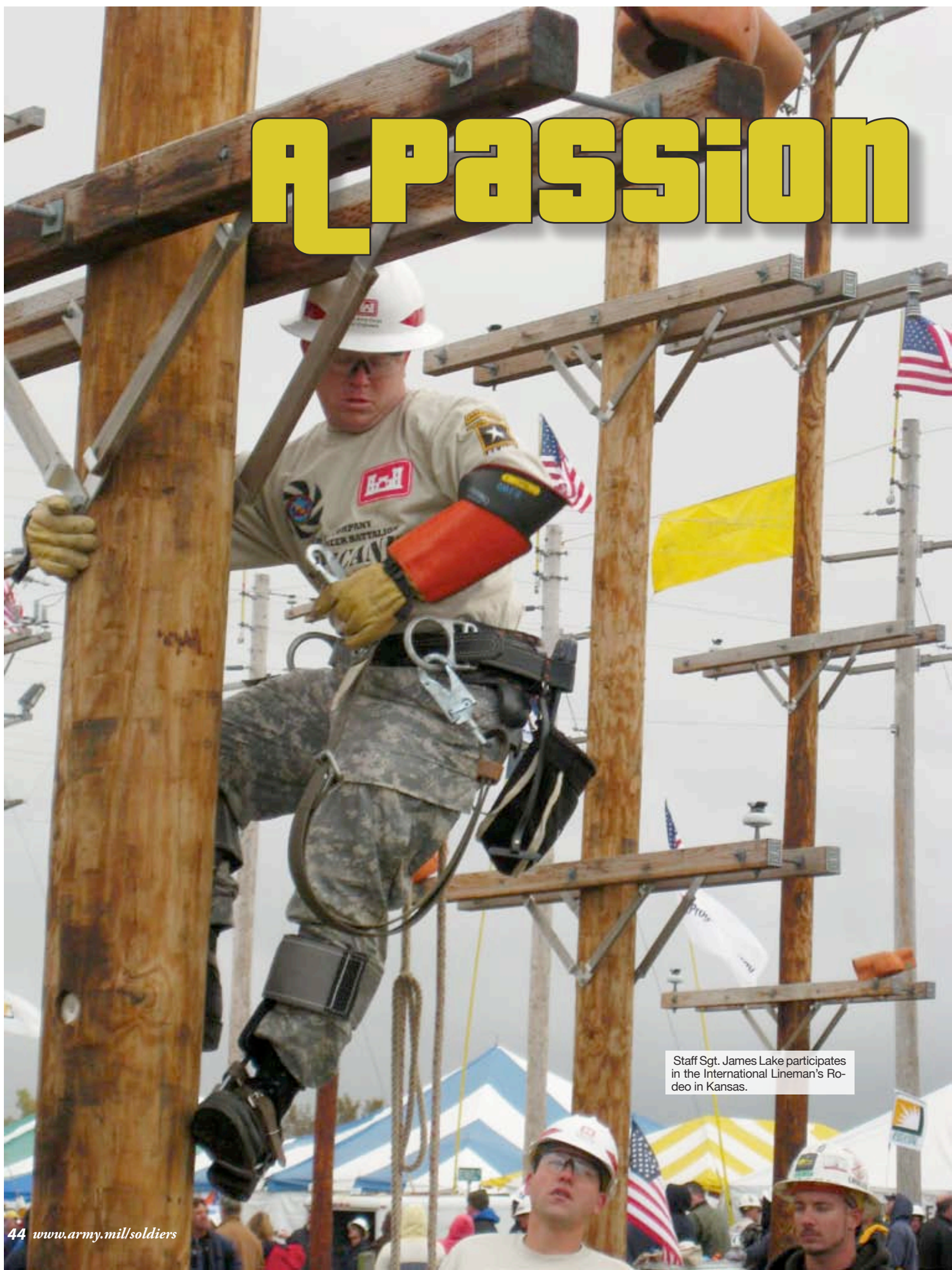
In the future, he will continue to facilitate sports nutrition and body composition research and how it impacts Rangers' ability to conduct their mission in the current operational setting.

"There is a lot of anecdotal information and studies on athletes, but very little research on the military," said Montz.

Barringer also hopes to complete a doctorate in his field of study to pass on what he's learned, and to show others that keeping healthy can be a piece of (low calorie) cake. ♦



# A passion



Staff Sgt. James Lake participates in the International Lineman's Rodeo in Kansas.



# FOR POWER

Story by Bernard Tate

Photos courtesy of the  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

SOME elite Soldiers parachute behind enemy lines and carry out reconnaissance and raids. Other elite Soldiers train guerillas in foreign countries. But the Soldiers of the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) are elite because they work with millions of watts of electric power.

The 249th, nicknamed the Black Lions, is the only prime power generation unit in the Army, and the only battalion assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It provides commercial-grade electric power to military units and federal relief organizations during any kind of operation ranging from training to disasters to war.

"We work with commercial-grade, medium-level voltage, from 600 volts up to 69,000 volts," said Lt. Col. Matthew Tyler, commander of the 249th. "But you have to also consider the amount of electricity, not just the voltage. Each of our platoons operates a Deployable Power Generation and Distribution System, which generates 3.2 megawatts. In Afghanistan and Iraq, Soldiers of the 249th manage central plants with upwards of 100 megawatts.

"Our safety record is excellent," Tyler added. "We've never had anyone killed in the 249th, and haven't had a reportable electrical accident in more than three years. Just this past year, the 249th received the Composite Risk Management Award from the director of Army Safety."

The 249th currently has Soldiers deployed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Other military support includes providing power for the Special Opera-

tions Command, the Theater High Altitude Air Defense System and the Missile Defense Agency's ground-based missile defense systems around the globe.

"We generate and distribute power to support our warfighters," Tyler said. "For example, we generate power in Iraq and Afghanistan to operate the communication systems and weapons systems and tactical operations centers. But it's not just communications and weapons and TOCs. When our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and coalition partners go out on patrol, they're better prepared because they have a life support area with running water, air conditioning in the summer or heat in the winter, and they can play Xbox or e-mail their Families to relieve stress. They're better prepared for their mission because they have electricity.

"Our other mission is to respond to natural and man-made disasters with emergency temporary power," Tyler added.

The Black Lions' recent disaster missions include the Haiti earthquake, the American Samoa tsunami; ice storms in Oklahoma; hurricanes along the coasts of Texas, North Carolina, and Massachusetts; floods in South Dakota and Iowa; and California wildfires.

"Nine times out of 10, we've had some sort of response to any federally-declared disaster," Tyler said. "It might be just one Soldier as a subject matter expert, or all the way up to several platoons to assess damage to the power grid and help install temporary power to emergency facilities."



After Sept. 11, 2001, Soldiers of the 249th used commercially provided equipment to generate emergency power for Wall Street, and the New York Stock Exchange resumed operation the next day. "We have a photo of a 249th Soldier at work on the trading floor," Tyler said.

All this means a high operational tempo, and the Black Lions use a force generation model to control the OPTEMPO. The battalion has four active-duty companies: Company A at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Company B at Fort Bragg, N.C.; and Company C and Headquarters & Headquarters Company at Fort Belvoir, Va. The battalion also has a Reserve unit, Company D, in Cranston, R.I.

"With three active-duty line companies, we have three primary postures that a company is in at any given time, and they will stay in that posture for about year," Tyler said. "So one compa-





A Soldier prepares cables for installation to the Fort Belvoir, Va., Primary Switching Center.

ny will be in the overseas contingency operations posture supporting deployed forces overseas. Another company will be in the National Response Framework posture where they are prepared to respond to a disaster. The third company will be in the prepare-to-deploy-on-order posture where they focus on training, like weapons qualification and mandatory classes that the Army requires.”

Besides the missions and OP-TEMPO, the Black Lions are unique in other ways. Like other elite units, Soldiers are not assigned directly to the 249th—they must apply for the unit, be accepted, then undergo a year of intense training.

“One unique thing about the 249th is the many MOSs (military occupational specialties) that our Soldiers held before becoming 12P prime power

production specialists,” said the 249th’s Command Sgt. Maj. Clint Pearson. “Anyone from any MOS can apply for the U.S. Army Prime Power School, but there are stringent requirements to qualify. A Soldier must be an E-4 or E-5 and have a minimum GT (general technical) score of 110. They submit an application package that is screened by the commandant and first sergeant of the school. Then the applicant is interviewed either in person or by phone by the first sergeant, and he or she must pass the Basic Math and Science Test. If they are accepted, then they go through the school, which lasts a year.”

The Prime Power School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., is divided into three phases.

The 16-week first phase is academics and focuses on physics, mathematics, thermal dynamics, and electrical

and mechanical engineering. Two semesters of college courses are packed into these 16 weeks, and students earn 31 college credit hours from a local community college.

The 15-week second phase is the operator phase, which is hands-on instruction with the power plant equipment the Soldiers will use in the field, especially the Deployable Power Generation Distribution System.

The final 16 weeks is the specialty phase when a Soldier focuses on one of three specialties—instrumentation, electrical, or mechanical.

Graduates of the Prime Power School are qualified in the 12P MOS—12 for the engineer field, P for prime power. Their basic weapon system is the DPGDS. Each platoon in the 249th operates the DPGDS, which consists of four power units produc-



A Prime Power School Soldier-student performs switching operations at Fort Belvoir, Va.

ing up to 3.2 megawatts, primary switching centers, secondary distribution centers and primary distribution panels. The DPGDS is mobile, and can be delivered by Air Force transports, or hauled by tractor-trailer.

The 249th is authorized 420 people with a current strength of 392. Of those, 217 are 12Ps, and consistently about 1 percent of the prime power Soldiers are women. Since only E-4s and E-5s are accepted into the Prime Power School, every enlisted Black Lion is a noncommissioned officer—one seldom meets a private in the 249th.

“Another unique aspect is our reserve component,” Pearson said. “Delta Company has one generation platoon, and the rest are overhead linemen. One platoon in Delta Company just deployed to pick up the Iraq mis-

sion, and in Afghanistan some of the Delta Soldiers are augmenting Charlie Company. Oct. 15, 2010, a team of Delta Company linemen competed in the International Lineman’s Rodeo in Kansas, and was extremely competitive in the military category against teams from the Air Force and a team from our Bravo Company. Ultimately, the Bravo Company team took first place.”

“Unique” and “elite” are good words to describe the 249th Engineer Battalion, but the Black Lions themselves use another word: “cool.”

“The 249th is cool because it’s unique,” said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Shetland, the battalion operations NCO. “We’re the only prime power battalion in the Army, and we deploy to some interesting places. I’ve been to Micronesia and Guam. I spent 14 months in Afghanistan, seven months



Sgt. 1st Class Maurice Thomas pulls a power cable with help from contractors in Iraq.



Sgts. 1st Class McHenry (center) and Dan Gilstrap provide assistance in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in New York City.



Soldiers prepare emergency power connections on a generator after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York City.

in Iraq twice, and I went to Oklahoma during the ice storms.

“Another thing that’s special about this battalion is that we’ve been fighting the war on terrorism from day one,” Shetland said. “We responded on 9/11 to both the Pentagon and New York City. We got Wall Street up and running the next day. And we’re one of the few units that have been continuously deployed to both theaters of operation from the beginning.”

“I joined the 249th because I wanted to get out of the infantry,” said Staff Sgt. Brandon Ecker, the battalion training NCO. “What could I do when I got out of the Army? My janitorial skills were fantastic. I could pull gate guard anywhere. But there wasn’t really any future in it. So when it came time to reenlist, I talked to my career counselor. He recommended a couple





Staff Sgt. Wayne Trepanier and Sgt. Juan Zavala test current on transformers during annual maintenance at Fort Belvoir, Va.



Sgt. 1st Class Chris Shetland and Staff Sgt. William Kline splice cable in Iraq.



Soldiers of the 249th Engineer Battalion use the MEP-PU-810A, a medium voltage power unit that produces 920 kilowatts and can be towed to remote locations.



Sgt. 1st Class Maurice Thomas places caution marking tape over soon-to-be buried power cables in Iraq.

of things, and prime power was on the top of his list. So I put in the paperwork, got accepted, and I've been here five years.

"With what I've learned, I can step out in the civilian world and be competitive," Ecker said. "My peers learned this trade, got out of the Army, and went into other fields doing the same things we do here, but in civilian companies. One guy went on to work on robots, and one guy works for a cruise line in Florida, working on electrical systems for the big cruise ships. The 249th gives us a good stepping stone into a civilian career, and that's cool."

"Prime power is one of the coolest MOSs there is," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Richards, senior prime power technician. "I've been on some really neat missions courtesy of the 249th and the job that I do. When I was stationed in Germany, I was in eight countries on TDY (temporary

duty). I was in three countries in Africa. I was in Macedonia. I've been to Puerto Rico. I've been to Korea both for duty and for TDY. I've flown in a helicopter checking transmission lines in Africa.

"Nothing against the infantry, but when you're not at war, what do you do with an infantry Soldier?" Richards asked. "As a prime power Soldier, I never had to play Army because we were always doing it. We deployed to little obscure countries in austere conditions, and that's just part of normal business. I've never had to go to the field and pretend that we're doing this stuff, because we're doing it every day. And that's what makes it neat, being able to contribute and have a bona fide mission every day." ♦

Bernard Tate works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Public Affairs



# gear UP! FOR THE COLD

## COLD weather clothing:

- Keep it clean
- Avoid overheating
- Wear it loose and in layers
- Keep it dry

## Watch for effects to the skin, such as:

- Swollen, red or darkened
- Pain, tenderness, hot or itchy
- Numbness or tingling
- Bleeding or blistered
- Gray, waxy feeling or "wooden" to the touch

## Other symptoms to look for include:

- Dizziness, weakness or blurred vision
- Uncontrollable shivering
- Lack of coordination and impaired judgment
- Painful, red, watery or gritty feeling in the eyes (snow blindness)

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